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CIA and the Firing of Hans Tofte

The key operatives of the Central Intelligence Agency these days are reported to be reading advance copies of a fascinating new book by their old chief, Allen Dulles.

The title, "The Secret Surrender," sounds like a perfume or an amorous movie, but the book is actually about "Operation Sunrise." It describes the "thrilling events" which triggered the Nazi surrender in Italy at the end of World War II.

This column, however, is not about the Dulles book, but about the fact that it makes a nice change in the reading habits of the CIA men. If they have to devour spy thrillers all the time, it would seem better for them to read fact rather than fiction, for all these dripping novels about secret agents appear to be having a peculiar effect on our real-life espionage operations.

Take, for instance, the present Tofte case, which has intrigued and mystified Washington for weeks. If it weren't for "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold," it would be hard to believe that the CIA could ever have produced such an opera as the bizarre dis-

missal of Hans Tofte, one of its most decorated undercover men. A case of nature, or rather the CIA, imitating art.

Like Alec Leamas, the famed hero of "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold," Tofte has now been "put on the shelf" and, again like the fictional British agent, shelved in such a way as to suggest he has been "badly treated."

The parallels are striking in other respects as well. Leamas was a quiet, fiftyish, veteran of British intelligence. He made his reputation by daring undercover activities during and after the war in Norway, Holland, and Germany.

Despite his long and devoted record, he was coldly put on probation, and then ousted (without pension or other benefits) because of a single "questionable" mistake.

In the novel, "it surprised no one very much when they put Leamas on the shelf. Berlin had seen a failure for years, and someone had to take the rap. Besides, he was old for operational work. Leamas had done good work during the war; and at the end of it they gave him a medal and let him go.

Hans Tofte is also Finnish, and a non-James Bond type. He, too, made a reputation by his European and ground operations during and after the war. He is honored by the Danish, British, and Yugoslavian governments for his feats.

His deeds in the Office of Strategic Services and in the successor CIA won him the U.S. Legion of Merit. In the Korean War, he led CIA operations in Korea and Japan. Like Leamas, he left the Service only to return, ending up as a \$25,000-a-year man in Washington.

The events leading up to Tofte's dismissal are still clouded, but they began some weeks ago when Tofte put his Washington house up for sale.

A prospective buyer (another CIA employee as it turned out) locked over the house while Tofte was absent. In the course of his inspection, he is supposed to have noticed some classified material on the premises, presumably in violation of regulations. Later the visitor returned with another CIA agent, again in the absence of Tofte, and picked up the papers.

Tofte hit the ceiling. He charges the agents entered his house under false pretenses and violated his Constitutional rights. Also, his wife told police that \$20,000 in jewelry had disappeared after the visit.

Nevertheless, like Leamas, he has been sent out into the cold. The CIA (without further explanation) has terminated his contract, effective next month. Tofte's answer is:

"The CIA has operated in a manner beyond the law of the land . . . The question of security that served as the cover for the amateurish raid on my private residence is absurd in the light of agency practices, and the contents of the classified papers—and the highest officials in the CIA know it."

All of which raises a nice question: Is this the way CIA really treats its long-time, top-level people, or has "Control" just been reading so many spy stories that it

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